

Statement
by
W. E. Colby
Director of Central Intelligence
before
American Conservative Union
October 9, 1975

Many nations have investigated their intelligence services. Sometimes this has been because of abuses, suspected or real. Sometimes it is because of failings. The United States investigated its intelligence services after Pearl Harbor and drew the lesson of the need for central intelligence, to draw together all the bits and pieces of information available to our Government into an overall assessment.

A major difference exists between foreign investigations and the one we are now conducting of American intelligence. Most have appointed a respected individual such as a judge, with full authority to conduct the investigation in secrecy. In the fullness of time, he delivered his final conclusions and recommendations after a sober and serious review, unaccompanied by press coverage or leak.

Our present investigation is a legislative one. Some subjects are indeed investigated in privacy, but some are displayed to the TV cameras. The purpose is to ensure all of us in America that we will have a responsible intelligence service, one which will conform to our Constitution and laws. But in this process, we Americans must be responsible about the way we go about our investigation. We must not call upon secrecy to hide failures or wrongs in our past, as President Ford has clearly ordered. But if we yield to

the temptation of sensation, we can hurt our safety. If we only seek publicity, we can reduce our protection. Our investigators must be responsible with respect to the sensitive information they learn in privacy. And our intelligence personnel must be responsible to retain the secrets they pledged to respect, as well as to follow the oath they took to our Constitution and laws. We must draw the line between what can and should be shared with our 214 million fellow Americans, and this, inevitably, with our foreign adversaries, and what all of us would agree should be concealed so that our intelligence can work.

This responsibility is not only a political responsibility; it is a moral responsibility. It is a responsibility for the lives of our agents and for the livelihood of the American companies and individuals who helped their government with the assurance that their connection with intelligence would never be revealed. It is a responsibility for the integrity of the work of our technicians who discovered chinks in an adversary's armor which can be corrected if disclosed. Above all, it is a responsibility for the lives of all Americans who seek safety and peace from the many threats facing us in today's world and the world of the future.

We live in a dangerous world. A nuclear missile 30 minutes away is aimed and cocked at us here. The mutual

deterrents we may have established with our major adversary can be frustrated by the spread of easily manufactured nuclear weapons to reckless despots or paranoiac terrorists. The increasing interdependence of the world's economy, the growing problems of over-population and under-production, and the instability of a world order in which only about thirty of the 142 United Nations share our democratic standards of government, all pose a danger to our country. The rush of technology into new dimensions poses the hope of its use for the settlement of human problems but also the danger of its use in unexpected weapons systems.

Thus we need good intelligence today and we will need it in the world of the 80's and 90's. We must not allow ourselves to be hypnotized by the mistakes or even the misdeeds of intelligence in the 50's and 60's so that we are blinded to the problems ahead and deprive our country of the intelligence needed to anticipate and meet them.

I do not say that we should not look backward and learn lessons from the past. But when we look backwards, let us look at the whole picture and not just the individual incidents. Let us apply the intelligence doctrine of centralizing all the information before we make an overall

assessment about our intelligence capabilities, not depend only on one jigsaw piece. Let us see the good with the bad. Let us see the big with the small. Let us add the new to the old. Let us listen to the studious as well as the brave. Let us learn from technology as well as the library. Out of all these, we will see that we Americans have the best intelligence in the world.

The best intelligence is not necessarily perfect. We do not yet have, nor pretend to have, a crystal ball at the CIA building. Rather, we centralize all the raw information -- open, clandestine, technical. We subject it to rigorous analysis by a corps of experts which cannot be matched in any other country. Their products are educational in the best sense of the word. They raise the level of understanding of our Government of the forces and factors at work in the world around us. Taking bits and pieces of information, they draw precise measurements, not only of where hostile weapons are today, but also of the development and deployment programs which will bring new weapons into existence years ahead.

There are unknowables as well as unknowns in the world around us. We make no pretension that our intelligence

It is thus totally unjust to ask the dedicated men and women of CIA who served their country at the front of danger also to serve now as a national scapegoat for a revision of our values and consensus of the past 20 years. We must investigate our intelligence, but we must do so in a responsible manner, so that we do not, five or ten years from today, investigate why and how we destroyed our intelligence in 1975.